Medical Billing, Coding, & Health Information Technician

WHAT I DO: I help health care providers get reimbursed for services given to their patients by collecting, organizing, coding, and maintaining patients' medical information in paper and electronic systems.

My tasks can include:

- Gathering and organizing information for patients' medical records
- Processing patient admission and discharge forms
- Reviewing patients' medical records for completeness and accuracy, and making sure that they are secure/kept confidential
- Speaking with doctors, other health care workers, patients, and select family members to clarify billing information
- Entering information (such as a patient's age, gender, history and extent of disease, and treatment) from medical records into computers
- Assigning a code to each diagnosis and procedure, using standard coding systems
- Compiling and maintaining records of patients who have certain health problems; analyzing data to provide research information
- Creating a filing and storage system to manage records and information
- Organizing and maintaining data for clinical databases and registries (such as organ donation registries)
- Assembling and analyzing patient data to help improve patient care or control costs
- Preparing medical records for release to authorized parties
- Billing insurance companies and preparing patients' invoices

WHAT MAKES MY JOB HOT?

Short-term training:

- To get an entry-level job, you need a high school diploma or HSE *and* a certificate of completion from a training program. However, some technicians have an associate's or higher degree. Many employers also require professional certification or the willingness to obtain it.

Faster than average growth:

- In New York City, this job is expected to grow 11% from 2010-2020.

Good pay & benefits (NYC, 2013):

- Typical entry pay: $32,990/yr.
- Median pay: $42,840/yr.
- Experienced pay: $50,100/yr.
- Benefits for full-time workers can include health and life insurance, paid vacation, sick leave, and a retirement plan.

My job is a good fit for you if you:

- ✓ like working with computers
- ✓ have good communication and people skills
- ✓ are detail-oriented and organized
- ✓ are patient and flexible/adaptable
- ✓ have good analytical/problem solving skills
- ✓ can stay calm in tense situations
- ✓ don't mind performing somewhat repetitive tasks
- ✓ can work well independently and as part of a team

For more information:

Go to www.careeronestop.org and search for "Medical Records and Health Information Technicians"

Jobs for the Future (www.jff.org) developed this Best Bet Profile with generous funding from the Pinkerton Foundation. Sources: www.careeronestop; www.mynextmove.org; www.iseek.org; Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2012-13 Edition,* Medical Records and Health Information Technicians, on the Internet at http://www.bls.gov/ooh/Healthcare/Medical-records-and-health-information-technicians.htm#tab-1 (visited July 5, 2013); www.collegegrad.com; www.mb-guide.org; Labor Statistics from the NY State Department of Labor (http://labor.ny.gov/stats/index.shtm) • Photo Credits: Left photo: © AbleStock / Jupiterimages; Right photo: © Jaimie Duplass / Fotolia.

Getting a Foot in the Door: What Employers are Looking For

Employers may also refer to me as a:

- Coder or Medical Coder
- Biller or Medical Biller
- Computerized Medical Billing Associate
- Health Information Specialist/Technician
- Medical Records Coordinator/Technician

Employers in the New York City Region include:

- Private doctors' offices/medical practices
- SUNY Downstate Medical Center
- Maimonides Medical Center
- Kings County Hospital Center
- New York Methodist Hospital
- Montefiore Medical Center
- Weill Cornell Medical College
- Sunrise Senior Living
- Major insurance carriers, skilled nursing facilities, urgent care centers, and select law firms

Things to Consider When Applying for a Medical Billing, Coding, & Health Information Technician Job	
Academic/ training & other credentials:	• Many New York City employers will hire entry-level medical billing, coding, and health information technicians with a certificate of completion from a training program. However, some prefer that job applicants have an associate's degree. • Many employers also require professional certification, which you can get from several organizations such as the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) and the American Academy of Professional Coders (AAPC). Some organizations base certification on passing an exam, while others require graduation from an accredited program. Many coding certifications require coding experience in a work setting. Once certified, technicians typically must renew their certification regularly and take continuing education courses.
Other employer requirements/ preferences *may* include:	• Background check. Demonstrated proficiency working with computers. • Some employers will hire recent graduates for entry-level jobs, but others require or prefer some work experience (if you don't have much work experience, see tip in below section).
Tips to help you prepare for, land, and succeed in a medical billing, coding, & health information career:	• Set to take effect in 2014, one of the new requirements of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) signed into law by President Obama in 2010 is that all physicians and medical facilities across the country provide their patients with electronic medical records (EMRs). As a result, many facilities are transitioning from paper medical records to electronic ones, and are training staff in how to use the new record-keeping system. The widespread use of electronic health records (EHRs) by all types of healthcare providers should lead to an increased need for technicians. As EHR systems continue to become more common, technicians with computer skills will be needed to use them. In addition, because the ACA will increase the number of people with health insurance in the US, the health care industry will need more technicians to manage their health records. • Hospitals will employ the most technicians, but the majority of new jobs will likely be in doctors' offices. Many new jobs are also expected in nursing homes and home health agencies. Or, if you are an entrepreneur (looking to start your own business / be self-employed), you can gradually start your own home-based billing service. • You have a better chance of landing a job if you are professionally certified. Technicians with a strong background in medical coding will be in high demand. • If you don't have much work experience in the field, it is highly recommended that you volunteer as much as possible at a community health center or hospital, for example. Though you will not be paid for this work and your duties may be limited to things like filing records, treat it as a job so that you leave the employer with the best impression possible (you have great attendance and show up on time, you work hard and care about your work, you dress professionally, you are humble, etc.). This can help you to build up your résumé and to get a good recommendation from an employer who can vouch for you. • Most technicians work full time, but there is some part-time work. In healthcare facilities that are open 24 hours a day, technicians may work evening or overnight shifts. This is one of the few health occupations in which there is no hands-on patient contact. • Most technicians work in hospitals (state, local, or private), clinics, or physicians' offices. Some work in nursing care facilities, or for home health care services, private billing and coding companies, or the government. • Technicians usually sit for long periods of time at desks in office buildings or in the back offices of hospitals or clinics. Some work in small file rooms. They may spend many hours in front of computers so they must guard against eyestrain and muscle pain. • Regardless of geography, hospitals and the government generally pay better for these jobs than doctors' practices or extended care facilities.

Skills & Abilities that Employers Typically Seek:

- Strong communication, customer service, and research skills, plus strong computer/keyboard skills (minimal amount of typing errors)
- Self-starter with organizational and time management skills
- Ability to multi-task, adapt to daily challenges, and work independently without a lot of supervision
- Professionalism and a high degree of ethical integrity (Medical records contain very private and sensitive patient information. A small slip of the tongue can get you into trouble and can cause serious problems for a patient. Think about it this way: How would you feel if a person told someone you barely know about a health problem you have that you'd rather keep private?)
- Sensitivity to patients' circumstances and needs
- Ability to be assertive (but not aggressive) and to keep emotions in check in stressful situations

Getting a Credential that Can Help You Land a Job

MEDICAL BILLING AND CODING SPECIALIST
AHIMA CCS EXAM TEST PREP CERTIFICATE PROGRAM
Continuing Studies Center, New York City College of Technology (City Tech) of CUNY

25 Chapel St., 4th floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201
David Pedreira, Assistant Director • 718-552-1168 • dpedreira@citytech.cuny.edu

Note: The program information below was collected in Sept. 2013; it is subject to change over time.

STEP 1: Learn about the program and make sure it's a good fit for your interests, goals, needs, and schedule.

- City Tech's Medical Billing and Coding Specialist Program is a part-time, 11-week program that meets Monday-Thursday, 6:00-9:30 p.m.
- It is a comprehensive and intensive 150-hour program that admits students three times per year in the spring, summer, and fall.
- When you successfully complete the program, you earn a *Medical Billing and Coding Certificate of Completion* from New York City College of Technology and are prepared to take the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) Certified Coding Specialist (CCS) exam for national certification as a coder.

STEP 2: Find out the cost of the program and make sure it's a good fit for your wallet.

- **Tuition, Fees, & Other Costs:** $1,395 for tuition, $20 registration fee, and approximately $220 for books. Payment plans are available. Money orders, bank checks, and Visa and MasterCard credit/debit cards accepted. No cash payments accepted.

STEP 3: Apply to City Tech's Division of Continuing Education. You must show proof of a high school diploma/HSE *or* a college degree. You can register online at www.citytechce.org.

CONGRATULATIONS – YOU'VE BEEN ACCEPTED INTO THE PROGRAM!

STEP 4: Successfully complete all course subjects and take advantage of résumé assistance.

The program curriculum includes:

- Anatomy and Physiology
- Medical Coding ~ CPT-4 (Common Procedural Terminology codes list descriptions of procedures and services of physicians and other medical professionals)
- Medical Coding ~ ICD-9 (national classification for diseases and injuries) and ICD-10
- Medical Terminology
- Medical Billing

The Counseling Services Center can help you with résumé development.

CONGRATULATIONS – YOU'VE EARNED A CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION IN MEDICAL BILLING AND CODING FROM CITY TECH!

STEP 5: Take the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) Certified Coding Specialist (CCS) exam. If you pass this exam, you are nationally certified as a coder. New York employers prefer that you be nationally certified.

STEP 6: Use your certificate of completion and your AHIMA CCS national certification to start working as a medical biller and/or coder *and/or* continue your studies. You can pursue higher credentials such as a Medical Records and Health Information Technician Certificate at City Tech's Division of Continuing Education. Options at other CUNY colleges include: an Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.) Degree in Health Information Technology at Borough of Manhattan Community College or Guttman Community College; a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Accounting, a Bachelor of Business Administration (B.B.A.), or a minor in Business and Liberal Arts (BALA) at Queens College; or a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Health Information Management (online degree) at CUNY's School of Professional Studies.

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Additional Programs in the NYC Region that can Train You to Become a Medical Biller and/or Coder:

- Hostos Community College (Continuing Education and Workforce Development Department): Certificate Program in Medical Billing and Coding (Bronx, 718-518-6656)
- Kingsborough Community College (Continuing Education): Certificate Program in Medical Billing/Coding Specialist (Brooklyn, 718-368-5050)

Moving on Up!: Grow Your Career and Your Paycheck

The sample career ladder below shows *one* way that you can move up in your career as a medical billing, coding, and health information technician. It illustrates how you can advance from an entry-level position to positions with higher levels of pay, skill, and responsibility. Regardless of the path you take, it really pays to move up!

Sample Career Ladder for a Medical Biller and/or Coder

STEP 5

Departmental Administrator

(typically has a bachelor's or higher degree in health information management/administration or business)

STEP 4

Billing, Coding, and Health Information Management Supervisor or Manager

(typically has an associate's or higher degree)

STEP 3

Team Leader

STEP 2

Billing and Coding Specialist

STEP 1

Entry-level Medical Biller and/or Coder

Occupations Requiring Similar Skills / Job Duties that You Also May Want to Explore

(Entry pay figures are based on New York State DOL data):

Title	Typical education/training needed for an entry-level job	Typical annual entry pay in the NYC Region (2013)
Pharmacy Technician	High school diploma/HSE and moderate-term on-the-job training	$24,420
Payroll and Timekeeping Representative/ Associate	High school diploma/HSE and moderate-term on-the-job training	$29,510
Insurance Claims and Policy Processing Representative/ Associate	High school diploma/HSE and moderate-term on-the-job training	$30,300

JOBS FOR THE FUTURE